

Phelps Battalion, #2 PRESENTS:

* QUEERS of WWII *

World War Two provided the catalyst for the first consolidation of U.S. Queer culture. Vast numbers of Queers left small town isolation to join the military or to take up defense jobs in urban centers of industry. Queer men found expansive social networks in every branch of the service, as well as in the expanding gay nightlife developing in port cities such as San Francisco, L.A., and New York. Queer women flocked to the Women's Army Corps, (WAC) while others filled defense and industrial positions previously reserved for men. Witch hunt investigations lead to mass discharges of Queers, depositing them in the nearest U.S. port cities. These displaced individuals formed the first gay ghettos in San Francisco's Castro and New York's Christopher Street. Their discharges were known as "blue discharges" and were neither honorable nor dishonorable, but rather 'undesirable.' Most blue discharges went to Queers and to Black soldiers and resulted in the loss of all veterans privileges.

ABOUT THE DESIGN: lots o' blue was used cuz the color was used throughout WWII to mark the 'undesirables' - a class of people dropped from the service w/out comment, disproportionately Queer &/or Black. "HS" was stamped on papers, ships, & prison uniforms to further segregate Queers.

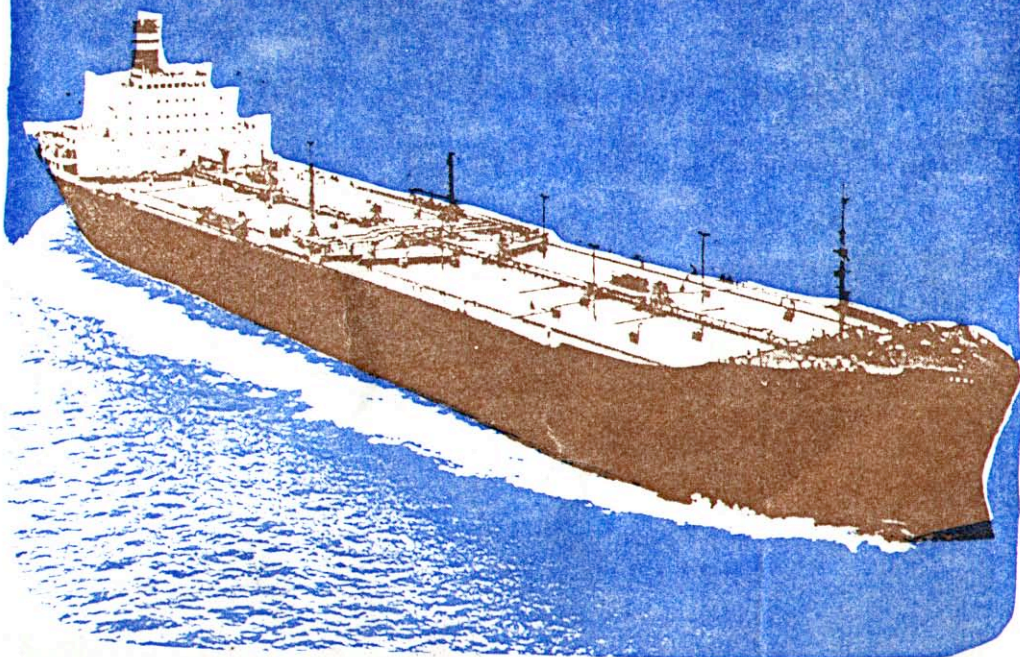
please send:

- 1) \$3 for a zine which compiles Phelps' Battalion #1-4 (\$3 or equivalent in stamps, zines, 7"5, etc...)
- 2) any stories of people/things you think we might be interested in, i.e. queers in yr family history, all yr role models, etc...
- 3) anything else - ?s, comments, banana bread...

To: Phelps Battalion
120 State Ave NE #109
Olympia, WA 98501

THNX.

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* HS *
No. 17



The discharging of Queers from military service often took place through witch-hunt investigations resulting in large numbers of soldiers being discharged together. These G.I.'s were transported to the nearest U.S. port on ships which came to be known as Queer ships. Few soldiers returned home after this disgrace and those who stayed in these port cities and looked for work formed the first gay ghettos in N.Y., L.A., and San Francisco.

Recently, while sitting on a park bench in Olympia, an old man sitting near me, mistaking me for a high school boy, began questioning me about the earring in my ear. "Son", he said, "do you know what an earring meant in my day?" "No", I said. "When I served in the South Pacific in the navy we had to transport a cargo of queers they had kicked out of the service back to the states and every other one of them had an earring like that." Each of 'em, queerer than a three dollar bill." At this point, I was amused until he continued. "If they want to act like animals we figured we'd treat 'em like animals. We beat those faggots all the way back to the states." Many soldiers did not survive the queer ship. Some were beaten and thrown over board, others simply vanished, their stories untold.